

GAUDEAMUS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF DIGNITY/PROVIDENCE
P. O. BOX 2231
PAWTUCKET, RI 02861

A MEMBER ORGANIZATION
OF G.C.S.R.I.
44 WASHINGTON STREET
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

dignity

Vol. III No. 7 July 1979

Marc Patrick, Editor

Dialogues

During the past few months DIGNITY/Providence has experienced a great deal of growth. Not merely growth in numbers, but more importantly, spiritual growth and a better understanding of the importance of our ministry. Part of this growth has come about because we have begun to "come out" of our closet and take a public stand on issues that affect us as Catholics and as gay men and women. Our coming out it seems has also brought mixed reactions from some people. I have heard some say that Dignity is becoming too activist and too feminist. I feel this merits some looking into.

To begin with, I do not see how we can accurately call ourselves both Catholic and gay, and not practice an active ministry. Because we are Christian, and because we dare to call ourselves "Dignity", we are called to reach out to those who have been deprived of a sense of self-worth in their lives. It is impossible for people to come to us, or for us to reach out to them, if we have bolted our closet door shut and barricaded ourselves within, for fear of incurring the disapproval of Church and society. Because we are gay we have a responsibility to both gays and heterosexuals - a responsibility to educate and help bring about greater awareness and understanding. There is no room in our Christian-Catholic-gay experience for passivism. If we are to practice what we preach we must be actively Catholic and openly gay.

I am not saying that each member of Dignity should come out publicly. Coming out is a personal and individual decision. Neither Dignity nor any other group can ask that of its members. However, let us keep in mind that the most important coming out we do is to our own selves. It really makes little difference whether or not we come out publicly as individuals. But it is important that we realize our gayness and accept it. I make a subtle yet interesting distinction in my own life. To me the word "homosexual" means little, and for that reason I rarely use it. Homosexual merely refers to one's sexual preference. The word "gay", however, means a great deal more. Gay takes in the whole person. It refers not only to one's sexual preference, but also to one's political, social, and cultural orientation, and in our case, religious orientation as well. Gayness is a lifestyle. It implies a specific concern and commitment to improve the quality (Continued on Page 2)

DIALOGUES (Continued from Page 1)

and dignity of life for homosexuals. The first step in coming out, then, is recognizing that one is gay and not merely homosexual - that there is more to our lifestyle than our sexual preference. This aspect of coming out Dignity can ask of its members and friends. That is what Dignity is doing. Dignity is asking us to actively realize our gayness as well as our homosexuality. Dignity's existence enables us to realize our spiritual orientation as well as our sexual orientation; to come out spiritually and live an active spiritual life.

Just as there is no room for passivism in what must be an active ministry, there is no room for chauvinistic discrimination. Discrimination touches deeply at the roots of what it means to be gay. It also touches to some extent upon what it means to be Catholic. But it touches deepest of all at the roots of what it means to be a woman. There is perhaps no action more un-Christian than discrimination. If any group needs to be understanding of women, it is Dignity. We must be understanding, not because we are feminist, but because we are Christian.

Yes, DIGNITY/Providence has become more activist than it has been in the past. As a result of this, we, as a group and as individuals, are formulating viewpoints based on a greater awareness of issues which affect gay people, and gay women in particular. But I do not believe that we have become too activist or too feminist. We are far from being "too" anything. In fact, we are just beginning to realize our potential role as gays and as Catholics. We have barely scratched the surface of the ministry we are being called to perform - a ministry which must be active and open, not passive and closeted. For us that is what being Christian and Catholic and gay are all about. And I do not believe it is possible to ever become too Christian.

Marc Patrick

Dignity is an international organization of Catholic gay men and women and their friends, working within the Church for the development of the Church's sexual theology, for the acceptance of gay men and women as full equal members, and to elicit responsive approaches both inside and outside the Catholic Church. Membership is open to all who are interested in living a more spiritual and aware lifestyle, whether they be gay or not, Catholic, or non-Catholic, or non-Christian. More information about Dignity can be obtained by writing to: DIGNITY/Providence, P. O. Box 2231, Pawtucket, RI 02861.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of DIGNITY/Providence, its Executive Board, its members, or of the Editor.

Dignity Boycotts 'Loft'

The following resolution was passed by the membership of DIGNITY/Providence on June 20, 1979:

WHEREAS, DIGNITY/Providence is an organization which strives for equality for all gay persons, and

WHEREAS, This is only a small part of equality for all persons regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or sexual affection, and

WHEREAS, Discrimination in any form directed to any person or group of persons is abhorrent and in direct violation of Christ's teachings, and

WHEREAS, The lounge called "The Loft" in Smithfield, R. I., has been found to discriminate against gay women by active discouragement and the charging of a ten dollar (\$10.00) cover charge,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That DIGNITY/Providence officially boycott "The Loft" until their policy toward gay women changes, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be sent to "The Loft", the Lesbian Feminist Union, Gay Community Services of Rhode Island, Gay Community News, and Dignity, Inc.

GCS Concerned Too

In a move apparently triggered by Dignity's initiating a boycott of The Loft, Gay Community Services of Rhode Island has sent a letter expressing their concern to the owner of The Loft. A similar letter was also sent to Cam's Lounge on Richmond Street in Providence, a gay "women's bar" which charges men a ten dollar cover fee. The letter, dated June 19th, reads in part: "As an organization concerned with building unity among lesbians and gay men we feel we cannot support separatist policies at bars. We realize this is a difficult and controversial issue, an issue with the potential of becoming quite volatile. There are already both men and women calling for an organized boycott. We feel there must be some alternative to a policy of questionable legality and fairness, a policy which has given rise to a great amount of hostility towards you in the gay community. We feel confident that you will give serious consideration to instituting a more flexible policy." Copies of the letter were sent to Gay Community News and DIGNITY/Providence.

Voices

Gentle voices
Quiet voices
Calling out
Calling out
Tones of loneliness traced with abandonment
Touched with despair
Despair
Calling out
Will we hear them?
Will we hear them you and I?

Daggered voices
Piercing voices
Rasping out
Silenced no more
Flashed with bitterness
Brutal enslavement fired with frustration
Prisoned anger
Shouting out
Will we hear them?
Will we hear them you and I?

Are you willing to suffer my friend?
Are you willing to die my friend that someone may live?

Strangered voices
Hungered voices
Crying out
Crying out
Sounds of hopelessness met with indifference
Years of nothingness
Biased promises
Crying out
Will we hear them?
Will we hear them you and I?
Will we care for them you and I?

-Rev. Carey Landry
Copyright 1970
North American Liturgy Resources
Cincinnati, Ohio

Prayers, Poems, & Prose

From Al...

Dear Friends in Dignity,

Even though summer and vacations are finally here, DIGNITY/Providence is still busy and active. I hope that all of you who have been so faithful in your support will find time for Dignity in your summer schedules.

At our last meeting on June 20, a resolution to boycott The Loft was passed. I would like to remind all Dignity members that it is their responsibility to honor Dignity's boycott, whether or not they personally agree or disagree with the boycott.

Another item discussed at the last meeting concerned sponsoring a bus to the National Gay Rights March on Washington, D.C. on October 14. Discussion on this will continue at the next meeting. I would like to ask now that all Dignity members seriously give this matter some thought. The march on Washington is quickly gaining support and importance. It cannot be successful unless we, the gay community, support it. Sponsoring a bus to Washington, D.C. for the march would not only lend support to the march, but it would also be an excellent opportunity for DIGNITY/Providence to show leadership and initiative (both of which are sorely lacking) in our local gay community. There will be a bus going to Washington regardless of what Dignity decides, but I think this as an opportunity which we should not pass up. Plus, Dignity can make a small profit from the trip. Think about it!

Election time is approaching fast. Nominations for a new Executive Board will be held in September, with elections to be held in October. Now is the time to start thinking about our needs for the coming year. Our bylaws should be looked at and necessary changes made to more clearly define the makeup of the Executive Board and the responsibilities of the board members. I would also like to encourage all interested Dignity members to run for the Executive Board.

And last but not least, an important reminder to members who have let their memberships expire. Please consider renewing your membership. DIGNITY/Providence is experiencing an upswing -- we'd like you to be a part of our growth. If you do not wish to be a member anymore, please be kind enough to drop us a line to let us know.

In closing, I wish everyone a peaceful and enjoyable summer. I look forward to meeting together again on July 18.

In peace and dignity,

Al Alves, Executive Chairperson
DIGNITY/Providence

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The best possible endorsement of "Ken's Corner" in the June 1979 issue of GAUDEAMUS would be a transcript of a discussion of the article which took place on May 28 between, among significant others, Ken, Marc Patrick, and myself. My particular interest generated from my visit to The Loft on May 18 with Ken and Peter, as their "test case". While I wasn't especially noticed, i.e., no "fish eyes", etc., I did note the definite discouragement directed at female customers.

This was only my third visit to a gay bar (of any kind). My first was to a mixed disco place in Fall River, hasslefree. My second experience was a Providence men's gay bar where (1) I didn't ruin the place, (2) I didn't give anyone any trouble, and (3) I was by no means an aggravation.

My stand in the aforementioned debate went as such: Ken and Peter are among my closest friends, and being the closet case that I am, they are my only contact with the gay community. In fact, they are one of the few stabilizing forces in my life. Once we start breaking gay bars down into "women's" and "men's", what happens to a relationship like ours? We have no place to share and enjoy. We'll save money by frequenting local liquor stores rather than the bars, but we will lack the company of other people.

The only opposition Ken and I received to our point of view, simply stated, is "Let the Loft's manager defend himself first." Quotations, according to "Ken's Corner", have already made clear the stand said manager takes. And if Cam's stand is similar, our criticism should be directed to them as well.

Following our visit to The Loft my friends escorted me to a "women's bar (my first!!!), where they were greeted with open arms by its owner. It was there that Ken summed it up

best. In response to a jokingly chauvinistic comment of his, I said, "Watch it, you're on my turf. You're a minority." He responded with, "No I'm not. Almost everyone here is gay!"

I'm sure that Ken and I are not unique. In which case, perhaps the owner of The Loft may do many of us a favor in turning his place straight. At the same time, the two bars that I previously mentioned, the men's bar and the women's bar, both of which accepted the three of us equally, deserve a special note of gratitude for what they've done for a great friendship.

Audrey

Editor's Note: Thanks Audrey for your letter. It's always nice to get a woman's opinion. Any other opinions out there? See Page 3 for a related article.

Opinions?

Gripes?

Compliments?

Ideas?

Whatever Else?!

GAUDEAMUS is always open to you. Your letters, articles, poetry, etc. are always welcome and encouraged. This is YOUR newsletter -- use it as a sounding board for issues that affect YOU!

The Tenth Anniversary Convention of Dignity International will be held in San Diego, CA from August 31st through September 3rd. The theme of the convention is "Challenge of the Decade". Speakers will include John McNeill, Midge Costanza, John Boswell, and the Rev. Ellen Barrett. More than 20 workshops and seminars will be offered. The convention is being held at the U. S. Grant Hotel, 326 Broadway, San Diego. For a flyer and registration information (registration deadline is July 24th), write to Dignity '79 Convention, P. O. Box 33721, San Diego, CA 92103.

DIGNITY/Providence wishes to thank The Providence Journal and Mr. Richard Dujardin, Religion Editor, for the article on Dignity which appeared in the June 9th Journal-Bulletin. A letter has been sent to The Journal thanking them and correcting several incorrect statements which appeared in the article. If you missed the article and would like to obtain a copy, a limited number of copies are available from the Secretary.

From Stonewall to Proposition 6; from Anita Bryant to Harvey Milk; from gay rights to gay pride to gay proms -- gay men and women are showing pride in their gayness as never before. We are showing defiance as never before. The gay community will celebrate its pride and defiance by gathering at our nation's Capital in numbers unprecedented in history for a National Gay Rights March on Washington, D.C., on October 14, 1979. A group from DIGNITY/Providence will be marching in Washington. Contact Al at (617) 764-2119 if you are interested in going.

Rev. Marge Ragona, Pastor of MCC Providence, leaves August 1st for her new ministry in California. DIGNITY/Providence wishes her well. Belle Pellegrino and Carleton Cornish will act as worship coordinators for MCC until a new pastor is appointed. Good luck Marge! And thanks for everything!

DIRECTIONS TO McAULEY HOUSE: Take I-95 to Exit 18 (Thurbers Avenue). Turn toward Eddy Street and follow Thurbers Avenue to the end. Take a right onto Broad Street, and then your third left onto Atlantic Avenue. Go one block. McAuley House is the red building across the intersection on your left.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The deadline for all articles, events, etc. for the August newsletter is Monday, July 23rd.

Events

Wednesday, July 18th, 7:30 pm---DIGNITY/Providence Liturgy, Business Meeting, and Social, McAuley House, 163 Niagara Street, Providence. All are invited to attend.

Monday, July 23rd, 7:30 pm---Gay Community Services Meeting, Mathewson Street Methodist Church, 134 Mathewson Street, Downtown Providence.

Wednesday, August 22nd, 7:30 pm---DIGNITY/Providence Liturgy, Business Meeting, Social, and Special Guest Speaker, McAuley House, 163 Niagara Street, Providence.

Friday, August 31st - Monday, September 3rd---Dignity International Tenth Anniversary Convention in San Diego, CA. See Page 7 for more information.

Sunday, October 14th---National Gay Rights March on Washington, D.C. See Page 7 for more information.

Every Sunday, 7:00 pm---Metropolitan Community Church Services, Mathewson Street Methodist Church, 134 Mathewson Street, Downtown Providence.

Every Tuesday, 8:15 pm---Gay Alcoholics Anonymous meets at St. Stephen's Church Study, 114 George Street, Providence.

Every Friday, 7:00 pm---Support Group for Gay Women, New Bedford women's Center, 15 Chestnut Street, New Bedford, MA (617) 996-3341.

Every Saturday, Noon - 4:00 pm---MCC Flea Market, 7 Junction Street, Providence.

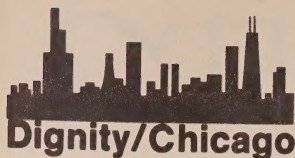
Gay Pride - Just a slogan?

2-4-6-8-Gay is just as good as straight! 3-5-7-9-Lesbians are mighty fine! A silly jingle? Perhaps. But to the more than 100 proud, brave, and bold gay men and women who marched in Providence's Gay Pride Parade on Saturday, June 30, it was not just a silly jingle. It was a proud declaration of our gayness and humanity; a bold proclamation of our goodness and equality.

This year's parade was terrific! And the turnout was very good (for Providence, that is!). It was a far cry from the twenty-some who marched last year. All who marched thoroughly enjoyed the experience and should be congratulated, especially the eight brave souls from Dignity who participated and very proudly carried our banner through downtown Providence. A special thanks to the management of "La Boheme" for the free drinks afterwards!

Yes, it was a terrific parade. But at the risk of interjecting a negative note into what was otherwise a positive gay presence, I cannot help but wonder where the rest of our gay brothers and sisters were. We all know for a fact that there are more than 100 gay persons in the area. Indeed, there are thousands! So where were they? In their closets, no doubt. But closet doors are easily opened, so let's see all of us out there next year!

Gay pride IS more than just a slogan. Of that I am convinced.



P.O. BOX 11261
CHICAGO, IL 60611
312-549-2633

July 7, 1980

Dear Colleague:

Due to the positive response to the First National Conference on Gay and Lesbian Issues last year, which brought people from 23 states, we are co-sponsoring with Oasis Center for Human Potential the Second National Conference on Gay and Lesbian Issues on October 10-12, 1980.

The enclosed flyer describes the exciting program.

We will this year have a display table for literature from not-for-profit/service organizations and resources for the community. If you would like to have a display, please so indicate on the form below and mail with a sample.

We would appreciate your distributing conference flyers to your members. How many could you use?

We would also appreciate your support in announcing the conference in your newsletter.

Just return the bottom portion of this letter in the enclosed envelope.

Sincerely yours,

R.J. Esposito
Conference Coordinator
Dignity/Chicago

- ☐ We would like to display our literature at the conference.
Enclosed is a sample.
- ☐ We would be happy to distribute brochures about the conference.
Please send us: 50, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500 brochures.
- ☐ We will be willing to publish information in our newsletter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____



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355 BOYLSTON STREET

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116

(617) 536-6518

February 25, 1982

Dear sisters and brothers,

One of our interests this year has been to bring to the attention of our community the importance of the role of women not only in our specific community, but also in our Christian tradition through the ages. We have been excited with the response that we have received from the Executive Board of our Chapter as well as from the members of our community in general.

We have had a concelebrated liturgy (with an Episcopalian woman priest) and a workshop on Female/Male Images of God and implications for Non-Sexist Liturgies, led by a woman priest from Integrity. We are also planning an Awareness of Women's Issues Day sometime at the end of March. These experiences are exciting and we hope to continue sponsoring similar activities.

Our next activity will be a Liturgy in Celebration of Women on Sunday, March 7 at 5:30 P.M. It is with joy and enthusiasm that we would like to extend a very cordial invitation to you all to share with us in our liturgy that day. The Mass will start at 5:30 in the afternoon at our usual space at Arlington Street Church (in the basement).

We hope to have the opportunity to Celebrate with you on March 7th.

In Christ,

Women's Concerns Committee
Dignity Boston

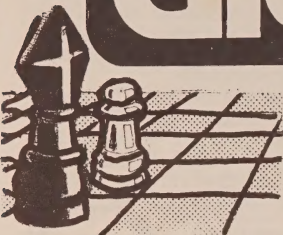
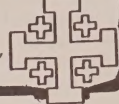
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DIGNITY, Inc.
NEWSLETTER

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1500 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 11,
Washington, DC 20005



Mitres and Ministry in Check! Checkmate?

refused comment on both investigations and it is also unknown which Vatican office or official requested the probes.

Following the Richmond visit, May reported to Rome but refused comment publicly on his findings and/or recommendations. The National Catholic Reporter (NCR) claimed that his investigation included the areas of liturgical abuse and priestly lifestyles as well as the need for appointing an auxiliary bishop in the diocese. Sullivan has come under fire for taking stands on opposition to capital punishment, U.S. intervention in Central America and the nuclear arms race and is pro-nuclear freeze. Both the Seattle and Richmond areas have large military installations, and these views do not set well with some Catholics in the area.

Following the Seattle probe, Archbishop Hickey was quoted in NCR, saying that he

was "overjoyed at the great progress of the Church" in Seattle and would be "very, very surprised" if Rome forced changes in Hunthausen's approach. He also added that he had heard from many "who express admiration for Archbishop Hunthausen as a man of gospel values, a bishop deeply committed to Christ and the Church." Hunthausen's main critics cite him for permitting what they consider heretical teachings on birth control, homosexuality, premarital sex and original sin. Others say he allows CYO youth to discuss disarmament which is not part of their purpose. Hickey said Hunthausen is very loyal to the Pope and that many of the critics allegations grow "out of efforts at renewal and I think that you could characterize the people (writing the letters) as people who felt uncomfortable with efforts at renewal."

(Continued on page 2)

The Healing Power of AIDS

Some have questioned this newsletter's omission of AIDS information and news on the epidemic situation in major cities across North America. Basically the topic was not touched since new developments have been occurring weekly and any attempt to realistically cover the AIDS crisis might have been outdated by the time readers received the information. It was felt that the media and health organizations could better assume the important task of keeping concerned individuals up-to-date. The following which appeared in the newsletter of DIGNITY/Bufalo (N.Y.) by Glenn has been slightly adapted for publication here and along with other related AIDS stories are offered for your information.
EDITOR

In school we read a novel by Albert Camus called *The Plague* (in French, *La Peste*). Camus, a writer who died in 1961, was an existentialist, meaning a person who sees a tremendous absurdity in the fact that a person's experience and achievement are wiped out by death. The only way to bring meaning to this absurdity is to choose to fight death: in other words, to live life as fully as possible.

The novel unfolds in Oran, an Algerian city of the 1940's whose inhabitants suddenly find themselves cut off from the outside world by the Bubonic Plague. Camus was using the plague as a means of representing an intensified experience of day-to-day life. A number of crisis come to mind which do the same thing: blizzards and natural disas-

ters; unemployment; a depression; illness; prison; a transit strike. On the bottom line however, the plague is our earthly existence itself, with all of its quirks — including sexuality (of whatever kind) and sin.

I was curious whether *The Plague* might have something to say to a society threatened by AIDS. As the scattered cases developed into an epidemic and people perceived a pattern, the unspoken reaction is: What does it mean? Facile preachers are usually first with an answer: God is punishing the victims for their sins. A bright young priest in *The Plague* proclaims that God is using the epidemic as a flail to separate the wheat from the chaff and make the lukewarm fervent. By the time he sermonizes again however, he has seen an innocent child die after a particularly long agony and takes a more humble approach. The second sermon is "we" instead of "you", "let's learn" rather than "I'll explain it." The suffering of a child is a wall which we all find ourselves up against, and we can either fight with our eyes on the Cross and faith in a God we do not understand, or simply give up and deny God. Shortly thereafter, the priest too, pays the plague's piper.

The inhabitants of Oran soon realize that everyone is in the same boat; regardless of their station in life. Likewise, if AIDS has a part in God's plan of salvation, it is becoming apparent that the lesson is not for homosexuals alone. But if gays and lesbians have a special role as prophets to church

and culture, it is best here that we focus our remarks on ourselves. There are two great points of comparison between our present situation and Camus' tale. First, what Camus says of Oran could describe any North American city:

In our little city, be it the effect of the climate, everything is done together in the same frenetic and absent mood. That is to say that one gets bored there and devotes oneself to picking up habits. Our inhabitants work and work but only to get rich... Naturally they enjoy simple pleasures too: they like women, movies, the beach. But quite reasonable, they reserve these pastimes for Saturday night and Sundays, trying, the other days of the week, to make

(Continued on page 3)

AIDS Hotline

The U.S. federal government now has a telephone information hotline for AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). The toll-free number which is staffed weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (EST) by Public Health personnel Service is (800) 342-AIDS.

Also available "Facts on AIDS", a free leaflet which will be revised as new information becomes available. For a copy, write USPHS, Office of Public Affairs, Room 721H, 200 Independence Ave. SW., Washington, DC 20201.

For those who need a geography lesson, Winnipeg is the capitol city of Manitoba, one of the ten provinces and two territories that form Canada and Region XI. Winnipeg is in the center of the nation and only a few hours drive from Fargo, North Dakota.

The city itself is known for its friendly people, (more than 570,000!), its diverse ethnic background, its rich history, and cold winters! It also boasts a world renowned symphony, ballet and one of the nation's finest examples of regional theatre.

Though large, the city has in many ways, a small town atmosphere. Hence, its friendliness, its strong conservative feelings, and its traditional attitude towards homosexuality...an attitude of indifference and neglect.

DIGNITY/Winnipeg/DIGNITE has been working to change these attitudes, since it received its charter in April, 1976. At that time, the Winnipeg chapter boasted a large membership and met frequently for services with its new chaplain. It became involved with the First Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Conference, and has always worked closely with such groups as the Council on Religion and Homosexuality, Gays for Equality, Giovanni's Room and Project Lambda. Our members have also done telephone counselling, appeared on our gay and lesbian radio and television shows, and have been interviewed by the local media. Just recently, a member and Regional Director, Ken DeLisle appeared on a national television production produced by the Winnipeg Gay Media Collective.

Supporting the work of the Region is one of the outreach services the chapter fulfills conscientiously. Once a month a few of the membership (total of 15 in two provinces covering 315 miles) gather to stuff the envelopes for the regional (national) newsletter. Members have also helped with xeroxing, filing, telephone calls, and in January, they hosted the first Canadian Board meeting.

The chapter went through hard times from 1977 to 1980 during a period when there was no priest for regular services. Many members also left the city, but a few struggled to keep the chapter going. For two years, the membership voted to "set aside" its constitution and to function as a collective. Each person volunteering to do only whatever he or she is willing to do, and all work being shared. Just over a year ago, we found a chaplain who celebrates Mass

for us on the third Monday of each month at Abba House, a retreat center and our membership has grown from a low of 4 to 15 in one year.

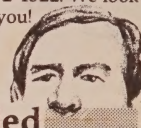
Our chapter recently presented a highly acclaimed report to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission urging that sexual orientation be included in amendments to the Human Rights Act. We have also supported the March for World Peace held in Winnipeg last June. This was the third largest gathering in North America. The Winnipeg chapter has agreed to let its name stand as a supporter in this year's march as well. We are also helping the Region with a fund-raising campaign.

In 1976, when the chapter was formed, all three bishops in the area were informed

of our presence. Winnipeg is the center of a French, an English and a Ukrainian diocese. Most correspondence has been with the English bishop, as our members are mainly from his diocese. The relationship has always been cordial between the Cardinal and the chapter and when the Cardinal retired last year, the chapter sent congratulations to the new bishop.

Our friendly city and our warm hearted members will welcome any of you who pass our way. We can be reached at Box 1912, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 3R2 or by calling (204) 772-4322. We look forward to hearing from you!

—JOHN E. ROBERTSON,
KEVIN SIMPSON
and KEN DeLISLE



Falwell's Accusations on AIDS Denied

Bishop Paul Moore Jr., Episcopal bishop of New York and a group of leaders of Protestant churches called a news conference to answer the attacks made by Rev. Jerry Falwell on the homosexual community as it involves the AIDS health crisis. Moore in answer to Falwell, stated that "AIDS is not God's vengeance upon the homosexual community. The God whom Jews and Christians worship is a loving and merciful God, who does not punish children like a wrathful Father...We believe, on the contrary, that God has a special love for His children when they are suffering persecution such as has been brought upon the homosexual community over the years." He further added that AIDS should not be an excuse to roll back the gains that lesbians and gay men have made or used to persecute Haitians.

In a sermon declaring the moral permissiveness of the 1960s and 1970s as "a period of unparalleled moral decadence in this country (U.S.)", Falwell, founder and leader of The Moral Majority called AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) "the judgement of God" and predicted a possible plague in the U.S.

Falwell told the congregation at Thomas Road Baptist Church, the church he pastors

in Lynchburg, Va. that "You can't fly into the laws of God and God's nature without paying the price" and again referring to the homosexual community, said "we sowed the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind...AIDS - not only incurable, like herpes, but hopeless..."

"At this point in time, there's not been one survivor yet, and now, it's breaking out in the heterosexual world through blood transfusions. And with hepatitis A and B and other diseases that are typically homosexual oriented, we have some serious dangers toward a possible plague in this country", he continued. "Have you ever stopped to think that if God decides to judge a country, there's no medication to stop him."

Besides Moore's answer, the Virginia State Health Department denied many of Falwell's remarks, calling attention to the fact that hepatitis "A" is not a disease "typically" found in homosexuals and that the "B" strain, which is found in gay men often, is not limited to the gay male community. The spokesperson also stressed that AIDS is not a threat to be compared to a plague, although a serious problem to some groups of people and health officials.

Bishops... (Continued from page 1)

A unnamed Vatican official told NC News Service that the purpose of an apostolic visitation is to clarify conflicting information about a diocese, and not - as some have speculated - to reprimand a bishop. The visitation is a formal investigation, ordered by the Vatican and authorized directly by the Pope.

In San Diego, California, Bishop Leo Maher has renewed his opposition to DIGNITY's ministry following a series of articles in the University of San Diego newspaper on gays and lesbians. The series included two articles on DIGNITY (unknown to the local chapter) and caused the issuance of two pastoral letters regarding the organization as well as a renewed

reminder to the priests of the diocese not to celebrate liturgy or minister to the chapter. A cartoon depicted Maher's automobile crashing into a man wearing a DIGNITY T-shirt, sending him flying off a motorcycle. In a subsequent interview, Maher was asked if the cartoon angered him and he said that it represented his sentiments.

The Bishop was very strong in his condemnation of the "Dignity" organization. "Those priests that say mass for 'Dignity,'" say mass in sinfulness and likewise those that attend that mass are sacrilegious.

More in our next issue.

Prison Ministry

Being behind bars is no joke - but you can help prisoners get through it by dipping your pen in sunshine and joining the DIGNITY Prison Ministry. Members write to a gay man or lesbian woman who eagerly awaits hearing from you with news of the outside world. For more information, write to the coordinator, Mr. Phil Murawa, DIGNITY Prison Ministry, Box 18479, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118.

Moving the Mountains

NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY

"Abba-Caretaker" (Part One)

It came as a surprise when I was speaking with a woman who was obviously a feminist and she told me that God is a nursing Mother. "No, no" I responded. "Jesus called God 'Abba' and 'Abba' means 'Father'." The woman responded that "Abba" is a babbling term and babbling children have not yet learned sexual differentiation. This mother of six had learned from reflecting on her own lived experience.

Thinking about the matter, I knew that God is a spirit and has no sex, and that both men and women were created in God's image and that they were created in equality. So, obviously, since babbling children hadn't learned sexual distinctions "Abba" could refer to women as well as to men. This realization made sense and pulled all of these aspects of teaching together. I thought that there would be no trouble at all selling feminine imagery for God once it was properly explained. I was wrong.

The argument I have received with this explanation is that non-babbling persons (i.e. small talking children and adults) used the term "abba" to mean "father" or "daddy". However, I believe this has little to do with the babbling nature and origin of the word. It should be remembered that some scholars believe that the term "Abba" was used by Jesus throughout His ministry when He was referring to His Parent, the Creator.1

A friend of mine put it this way: The connotation of "abba", the general, cultural, socially understood meaning of the word, gave a male identification or expression to the term. But the denotation of the term, the specific, literal meaning as determined by its origin, fails to give an identification of gender.

Jesus, then, used a term which made sense to His contemporaries who considered the female inferior and thus an "inadequate" reflection of God while at the same time naming as "Image of God" both sexes—all who care for babbling children. The ultimate question becomes: What was Jesus' intent? I think the following factors can be considered:—A word consists of its denotation and connotation. Jesus, the Living Word, knew both its social meaning and its meaning as derived from its linguistic source: the mouth of a babbling child. —Jesus is the Word who breathed all creation into existence. Jesus knows the nature of all created beings. Both man and woman are created in the Image of God.

dignity

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—Jesus often spoke of His "little ones". It would not have escaped His attention that little children have no prejudices, no racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, etc. He knew and knows His little ones. Jesus is the Least of the little ones.

—Jesus uses feminine imagery for God in the Gospels. If he had intended God to have a definite male identity He would not have done this. God is spoken of as a woman looking for a lost coin (the Holy Spirit) and as a woman who puts leaven in bread.

—The only other person who has not suffered the effects of original sin besides Jesus is Mary. Mary reflected God fully every moment of her life, in each and every one of her actions. Jesus knew that His Mother is a full and perfect Image of God, unequalled by anyone except Himself for all time.

—Jesus is a feminist. He did not share the attitude of His contemporaries toward women but treated them in the same way that He treated men.

—While the social understanding of the term "abba" was perceived as meaning "dada" by non-babbling persons, it was the social custom of the day to nurse children. A warm, special and loving relationship develops between a nursing mother or wet nurse and a nursing baby. The child was given over to the mother's care in the first years of life. It was further the Jewish

mother's special prerogative to pass on the Faith to her offspring in her care. Therefore "abba" could be as easily interpreted as meaning "mother" as "father" considering social custom.

If one looks to the origins of the word, one finds the following: "All attempts to trace the word back to a trilateral root must be regarded as failures. Instead it is to be understood, with Kohler, as an onomatopoeic word imitating the babbling sounds of an infant."2

—SUSAN MARONEK

Part two of "Abba-Caretaker" will appear in the next issue.

Karen Doherty — Women's Editor

NOTES:

*Parts of the content of this article first appeared in "When the Spirit Cries 'Abba': (Mother-Father)", the Bulletin: St. Joan's International Alliance, United States Section, ed. by Marie R. Bailey (March, 1980), pp. 14-15.

1The New Catholic Encyclopedia, (McGraw Hill Book Co., 1967), p. 4.

2 "Abu", Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, ed. by S. Johannes Botterwek and Hedmer Ringgren, trans. by John T. Willes (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974) I p. 1.

AIDS — Healing Power....Continued from page1

a lot of money...Doubtless, nothing is more natural these days than to see people work from morning to night and then choose to lose what time they have left to live in cafes, playing cards or shooting the breeze...There is no need, consequently, to detail how people make love in our city. They either devour each other rapidly in what is called the act of love, or they commit themselves to a long habit for two. Between these two extremes, there is not often a middle ground. Here, as elsewhere, for want of time and reflection, people must love each other without knowing it.

We know that physical disease, perhaps in this instance more than elsewhere, often springs from inner collapse. Even if AIDS is spawned in the dens of habit, the message applies as much to the culture as to the victims: slow down! Healing will occur only when we have had time to rest, to gather ourselves in, to admit that changes need to be made — and then only when we are ready to be healed. These things no doubt cross the mind of the AIDS patient. But the reaction of his or her friends is likely to be worse. The media has revealed that AIDS patients are shunned by the gay and lesbian community, straights and health professionals in defiance of all reason. Nor is such isolation anything new:

It is never pleasant to be sick, but there are cities and countries which support you

when you are sick; where one can, more or less, relax. A sick person needs gentleness, he likes to lean on something — that is only natural. But on Oran, everything demands good health. A sick person finds himself quite alone.

A few courageous lovers are giving AIDS patients the support they need with the "total abandon of themselves and disdain for their own person" which, for Camus, is the benchmark of the love of God. That sometimes means a rearrangement of one's life and career as drastic as that of the victim.

And, if Jesus in the flesh made us all lovers, we are all in this together. That includes the "innocent victims", the hemophiliacs and the Haitians, and others who know in their own right how awkward society feels with those who are different. Let us not reach the point where we have to say, with one of Camus' characters: "We are no longer capable of loving."

To those gay and lesbian humanists who, denying a divine plot, refuse to see any meaning in the AIDS syndrome except a clinical one, we must say: the bottom line is that we learn anew to work together against the fear-mongers. For every step we will ever take toward liberation, we will in some way have to start all over again. The community has become fragmented since the glory days of Stonewall. The greatest lesson is that whatever we do not do together, we may as well not do at all.

NewsBriefs

DIGNITY/SAN FRANCISCO is planning a "Mediterranean Odyssey" this Spring featuring fifteen days in Greece, the Greek Islands, Israel, Egypt, and Turkey with seven days on the TSS Atlas, a Greek luxury liner. The itinerary will include Rhodes, Alexandria, Cairo, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Luxor (Tut's Tomb), Patmos, Ephesus, Athens, Nauplia, Corinth, Olympia and Delphi.

DIGNITY/CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA members were active in the drafting and passage of an expanded Harrisburg Human Relations Act, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation/preference in employment, housing, credit and public accommodations. They also received a grant from their State Humanities Council to present a program titled "Sexual Minorities' Image in Current TV and Film", lecture/video presentation by Dr. Moylan C. Mills of Penn State U.

DIGNITY/QUEENS (New York) is receiving help from their diocesan offices (Brooklyn, N.Y.) in locating a church to hold their liturgies and other meetings. The membership is about 80 and it is one of three chapters in New York City. The chapter presently meets in a senior citizens center operated by Catholic Charities.

DIGNITY'S REGION III which covers the Middle Atlantic (U.S.) states is pursuing an aggressive Sponsorship Program to promote the establishment of new chapters. Current chapters are responsible for identifying areas where new chapters might succeed, to develop contacts, sponsor a social activity to spark interest and assist in any way in organizing interested people in new areas.

DIGNITY/LOS ANGELES hosted Fr. John McNeill, Jesuit priest, moral theologian, psychotherapist and author of "The Church and the Homosexual" for a two-day visit as a benefit for the AIDS Project. McNeill spoke at a dinner the first day on the topic from his new book "Messages to A Gay Christian" and the following day at a brunch on "New Dimensions of Christian Freedom".

WELCOME to DIGNITY/Northeast Wisconsin, located in Green Bay and part of Region VI. They became a chapter at a ceremony at St. Norbert's Abbey, DePere, Wisc. In formation are chapters in Lexington, KY (Region IV) and Colorado Springs, CO. (Region VIII).

REGION XI covering all of Canada, has formed a Task Force on Canada to study the Canadian chapters formation of a separate organization affiliated with DIGNITY, Inc.

IN REGION VI, David Sleeper of DIGNITY/-Twin Cities (Minn.) has succeeded Bill Seng as regional director. Bill resigned following the Seattle Convention last September. Our thanks to Bill and congratulations to David!

SEATTLE CONVENTION souvenir items are still available for those who missed getting them or did not attend. Write D.C. office for information on these memorable keepsakes.

CONVENTION '85 - Michael P. Conley, profile editor of this newsletter and member of DIGNITY/New York has been selected as chairperson of the next DIGNITY, Inc. convention to be held in New York City in September, 1985.

GLAD, Inc., the DIGNITY chapter encompassing the entire state of Wyoming has decided to disband. The chapter, founded six and a half years ago, has often been a leader in the DIGNITY family in ideas and communication. Their commitment to each other, their Church and the entire organization was inspiring. The 30 members may choose to affiliate with another chapter or possibly form a new support group to better serve their needs.

CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC LESBIANS is forming a network across the country among the members to serve as a center of information and support and provide a space to come together to share common values and faith life. For information, write: CCL, P.O. Box 134, Highspire, PA 17034.

DIGNITY/PROVIDENCE donated over \$1500. to McAuley House, a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, feeding and assisting the needy in Providence and the surrounding Rhode Island area.

IN LOS ANGELES over \$200. in toys was donated to the Sisters of Social Service for distribution to needy children by the L.A. chapter. Over the past nine years, more than \$1200. in toys have been contributed.

REGION VI in an Awareness Program, contacted all thirty-six bishops who head dioceses in their region, sending them a letter, and a copy of the San Francisco Task Force Report. Advertising has been placed in many diocesan and secular newspapers in cities targeted for possible chapter formation with a budget of approximately \$2000.

SIGMA (Sisters in Gay Ministry Associated) has elected Sister Marguerite Kropinak, CSJ as national coordinator. Also elected were Sister Andrea Nenzel, CSJP - Eastern coordinator, Sister Sue Woodruff, SNJM - Western coordinator and Sister Stephanie Bourgeois, CSJ as Southern coordinator. A Central Region coordinator is being selected as we go to press. SIGMA decided to initiate a Resource Directory of members available for education and ministry to religious communities through provincial and executive councils, formation teams and individual sisters, to be publicized through letters to the major organizations of religious sisters. For information, write SIGMA, 245 Azalea Drive, Monroeville, PA 15146.

IN ST. LOUIS, Archbishop John L. May has approved the formation of Courage, a support group for Catholic homosexuals who wish to remain chaste. The first group was established in New York City and it hopes to form a network in many dioceses. DIGNITY has long maintained a chapter in the City of the Golden Arch."

DIGNITY/LOS ANGELES, the original chapter that grew into over 100 North American chapters, is celebrating their 15th Anniversary this January with a banquet at the LA Hilton among other events. Our best wishes to LA — the cradle of the DIGNITY organization!

THE VATICAN...Latent homosexuality at the time of marriage does not constitute grounds for annulment, the Vatican's appeals court said recently. The judges of the Sacred Roman Rota issued their decision in the case in which they decided that the husband's homosexuality "does not exclude the possibility of a happy marriage."

ANITA BRYANT has "come out of the closet" after a four-year self-imposed exile to introduce a new line of Christian sunglasses called "Silent Witness". Selling for \$30. a pair, they have a 14K gold religious symbol on the earpiece near the temple.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST accepted a report which affirmed the sexual orientation of candidates for ordination should not be the reason why any candidates are rejected.

PINK INK - is the title of a new national Canadian gay and lesbian monthly magazine. The first issue appeared in late June and contains national (Canada) and international news, articles, interviews, profiles and regular columns. Chapters of DIGNITY/-DIGNITE can contact the new publication at Box 287, Station H, Toronto, Ontario, M4C 5J2 Canada.

UNITED METHODISTS - Almost 60 regions of this denomination have asked that the Church clarify its position on homosexuality and recommended its inclusion on the agenda for their decision-making 1984 General Conference to be held in Baltimore (May, 1984).

WHO'S WHO IN GAY AMERICA? For information on this publication, including listings, purchase, cost, etc., write to Dedham Potter Publishing Co., 77 Ives Street, Box 196, Providence, RI 02906.

dignity publications

HOMOSEXUAL CATHOLICS:: A New Primer for Discussion by Robert Nugent, SDS, Jeannine Grammick, SSND and Thomas Oddo, CSC. Up-to-date Q&A format with info on Church teaching, new theological/pastoral approaches, Scripture, sacramental practices, vocations, civil rights, social justice & Church related ministries. \$2.25

A DISTURBED PEACE by Brian McNaught. Second edition of selected writings of a gay Catholic. A book for everyone - gay or straight! \$5.95

Add \$1.00 per book for postage/handling. DIGNITY GENERAL STORE, Suite 11, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005.